



Commercial Body Art

Fact Sheet

Commercial Body Art funding levels directly impact the number of routine inspections and complaint investigations that may be conducted by contract workers on commercial body art facilities. (These facilities include any and all firms that provide body piercing, branding, scarification, tattooing, and/or permanent makeup services to the public, except where such services are provided under the direct supervision of a physician licensed by the Louisiana State Board of Medical Examiners.) It also indirectly impacts all other services provided by noncontract sanitarian employees of the Food and Drug Unit of the Department of Health and Hospitals. Simply put, decreasing funding of the contract for commercial body art inspections means that the burden of performing these inspections must be shouldered by full-time sanitarian staff, and this means less time for those staff members to devote to other activities. Because inspections and registration are mandated by state law (LSA R.S. 40: 2831 *et seq.*) and department regulations (Part XXVIII of Title 51 of the Louisiana Administrative Code), any baseline activity required (e.g., pre-registration inspections) that could no longer be funded through the contract would have to be performed by salaried sanitarian personnel.

Objective

Commercial Body Art regulation protects the health and safety of Louisiana's citizens and visitors by ensuring that practitioners of commercial body art who ply their trade within the state conform to minimum professional and sanitary standards.

Performance Indicators

- # inspections performed: # inspections required

Narrative

Commercial body art laws and regulations mandate a variety of activities in relation to its practice and oversight. Trained sanitarians must review the plans for any new establishments to verify compliance with requirements and subsequently inspect the completed facility to ensure

that what is built conforms to the submitted plans. Clerical staff must enter data regarding the facility and its operator(s) into our database and ascertain whether operator applicants meet the training requirements to receive a registration. Sanitarians must also visit sites of proposed temporary CBA operations such as trade shows and festivals to verify compliance with requirements of these activities.

Better Health

Any transaction that involves contact of one party with another's bodily fluids (primarily blood in this case) necessarily has the possibility of causing transmission of blood borne pathogens. Additionally, because many of the regulated activities may be dangerous to the health of the client when performed by

unskilled or untrained personnel (tattoos and piercings can lead to septicemia or other systemic infections, branding and permanent cosmetics can lead to unintended disfigurements if performed improperly), regulations to provide a minimum level of training and practitioner oversight help to enhance the health and well-being of Louisiana's visitors and taxpayers.

It is widely known that tattooing has certain inherent health risks; failure to sterilize reusable equipment or reuse of single-service articles may lead to the spread of diseases such as Hepatitis A, and HIV infections. The most pernicious of these possible outcomes is the spread of Hepatitis C. An alarming research study recently published by the University of Texas Southwestern Medical School in Dallas uncovered that **the "innocent" commercial tattoo may be the number one cause of hepatitis C** (Haley RW, Fischer RP, *Commercial tattooing as a potentially important source of hepatitis C infection, Medicine*, March 2001;80(2):134-151). Dr. Haley, who specializes in epidemiology and is a former employee with the U.S. Public Health Service, is well-qualified to address this topic.

Dr. Haley concludes, "We found that **commercially-acquired tattoos accounted for more than twice as many hepatitis C infections as injection-drug use.**" This means that commercial tattoos may represent the largest single contributor to the nationwide epidemic of this form of hepatitis. The study also found that people who get tattooed in a commercial tattoo parlor were nine times more likely to get hepatitis C than the average person! This implies that a substantially greater risk is taken by citizens who choose to obtain tattoos than by those who do not. The study does not address homemade, amateur, or prison tattoos, but tattoos provided by ostensibly-clean and professional tattoo parlors.

The vast majority of states provide little or no regulatory oversight to the tattoo industry. In Louisiana, we have regulated these operations since June 2002. In that time, no known cases of hepatitis or other blood borne diseases have been traced directly back to a Commercial Body Art facility permitted by this program.